

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated January 17, 2007, has been received and its contents carefully reviewed. Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 1-5, 7, 11, 13-43, 52-58 and 86-106.

By this Amendment, claims 44, 47, 108, 112 and 114 are amended. Accordingly, claims 1-5, 7, 11 and 13-118 are currently pending, with claims 46, 48-51, 84, 85, 107, 117 and 118 being withdrawn from consideration.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 7, 11, 15-21, 31 and 39-43 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-41 of co-pending Application No. 10/661,515 in view of Hashizume (U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. US2002/0062787); claims 43, 44, 45, 47 and 108-116 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of co-pending Application No. 10/661,515 and Hashizume and further in view of Tateyama (U.S. Patent No. 6,837,672) and Takeda (JP 06-061328); claims 3-5 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claim 1 of co-pending Application No. 10/661,515 and Hashizume and further in view of Satoshi (JP 2001-356353); and claims 114-117 are provisionally rejected on the grounds of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-41 of co-pending Application No. 10/700,475 in view of Hashizume. Applicants respectfully submit that it is premature to consider filing a Terminal Disclaimer at this point, as these double patenting rejections are provisional in nature. Applicants will consider filing a Terminal Disclaimer when those copending applications issue as patents.

In addition, claims 108-111 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Hashizume; claims 108-112 and 114 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashizume and Takeda; claim 113 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashizume in view of Lofaro (U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. 2001/0005669); claims 114-116 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hashizume and Tateyama; claims 44 and 45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi, Hashizume and Tateyama; and claim 47 is rejected under 35 U.S.C.

§103(a) as being unpatentable over Satoshi, Hashizume, Tateyama and Takeda. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Claim 44 is allowable over the cited references in that claim 44 recites a combination of elements including, for example, “first alignment means for leveling the upper stage with respect to the lower stage, the first alignment means including an actuator fixed to the upper chamber unit and a shaft fixed to the actuator...a receiving groove arranged within an upper surface of the lower chamber unit for receiving the shaft” None of the cited references, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 44 and claims 45-46, which depend therefrom, are allowable over the cited references.

Claim 47 is allowable over the cited references in that claim 47 recites a combination of elements including, for example, “first alignment means for leveling the upper stage with respect to the lower stage, the first alignment means including an actuator fixed to the upper chamber unit and a shaft fixed to the actuator... a receiving groove arranged within an upper surface of the lower chamber unit for receiving the shaft” None of the cited references, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 47 is allowable over the cited references.

Claim 108 is allowable over the cited references in that claim 108 recites a combination of elements including, for example, “...an interval control groove arranged within a surface of the other of the upper and lower chamber units, wherein at least a portion of the sealing member is receivable within the interval control groove.” None of the cited references, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 108 and claims 109-111, which depend therefrom, are allowable over the cited references.

Claim 112 is allowable over the cited references in that claim 112 recites a combination of elements including, for example, “...an interval control groove arranged within a surface of the other of the upper and lower chamber units, wherein at least a portion of the sealing member is receivable within the interval control groove.” None of the cited references, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly,

Applicants respectfully submit that claim 112 and claims 113, which depends therefrom, are allowable over the cited references.

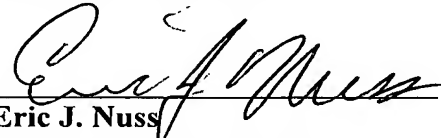
Claim 114 is allowable over the cited references in that claim 114 recites a combination of elements including, for example, "...an interval control groove arranged within a surface of the other of the upper and lower chamber units, wherein at least a portion of the sealing member is receivable within the interval control groove." None of the cited references, singly or in combination, teaches or suggests at least this feature of the claimed invention. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 114 and claims 115-117, which depend therefrom, are allowable over the cited references.

Applicants believe the application is in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited. If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. *A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.*

Respectfully submitted,

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